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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 001866

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MR](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN POLICY ON MAURITANIA

REF: A. STATE 159146

[1](#)B. ALGIERS 1759

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) In an August 31 meeting with FM Bedjaoui on other issues, Ambassador briefed on U.S. policy approach toward Mauritania Ref A), emphasizing that the United States wanted to see an early return to constitutional order (6-12 months) and to keep the African Union (AU) in the lead as our principal partner in pushing for elections and ensuring a smooth transition. Ambassador said we understood that the new military leadership was asking for UN election assistance, which was positive. However, they seemed to be thinking in terms of a referendum a year from now and elections the following year. This was much too long a time to return to constitutional order and was a matter of concern.

[1](#)2. (C) Bedjaoui said he "quite agreed" with the U.S. approach. He emphasized that the AU's historic decision to condemn all unconstitutional changes of government had been taken in Algiers. Maintaining the principle of the unacceptability of military coups was thus especially important for Algeria. Algeria had thus supported the AU's condemnation of the coup and, during the August visit of a Mauritanian envoy (Ref B), had urged the need to return to constitutional order in Mauritania. Since Mauritania was a neighboring country, Bedjaoui commented, its stability was important for Algeria, which was engaged in organizing elections and supporting the AU position. At the same time, he added that Algeria had the impression the ousted government had been "too dictatorial."

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador noted in this regard that there seemed to be very little popular resistance to the coup and that some of the reforms the new leaders have mentioned were positive. That said, we believed that a two-year timeframe for elections and a return to constitutional order was not acceptable and that even positive reform measures would lack legitimacy, unless they were adopted by an elected government and parliament. Our collective energies and focus, Ambassador stressed, should be on getting new elections scheduled within 6-12 months.

ERDMAN